

January 31, 2007

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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today in favor of the Joint Funding Resolution (H. J. Res. 20) that will keep the federal government running through fiscal year 2007, which began four months ago. While the continuing resolution generally keeps funding at fiscal 2006 levels and excludes all earmarks, funding for the implementation of the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) was recently added in to the bill, following a request from Rep. Melancon (see letter [here](#) .) Senator Mary Landrieu sent a similar letter to Senate appropriators. The Joint Funding Resolution passed the U.S. House of Representatives today.

"Without this last minute addition to the funding resolution, this vital coastal restoration project would have been put on hold for another year," said Rep. Melancon. **"Louisiana's eroding coastline cannot afford to wait any longer for Washington to pass a budget and get this project moving. I'm pleased the appropriators and the leadership recognized how important coastal restoration funding is for our state and decided to add it to this year's final continuing resolution."**

The Coastal Impact Assistance Program, which was established by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-58), authorizes funds to be distributed to Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas producing states for the purposes of coastal restoration and mitigation of the impacts of OCS oil and gas activities.

Louisiana will receive approximately \$540 million over the next four years for coastal restoration and hurricane protection related projects through the CIAP.

Before any of the funds can be disbursed, the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) faces substantial administrative responsibilities: determining the funding allocations, reviewing and approving coastal impact assistance plans, conducting an Environmental Assessment, to name but a few. Although the MMS was allotted one-time funds in 2006 to begin the work necessary to implement the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, the agency has stated that it requires additional funds to continue this vital work.

While the fiscal year 2007 Interior Appropriations bill included funding to cover these costs, the 109th Congress failed to pass the bill before the end of FY 2006 and none of the subsequent continuing resolutions have included CIAP funding. As a result, the MMS's vital work on this critical component of Gulf Coast reconstruction has drawn to a halt.

Rep. Melancon urged the House Committee on Appropriations to include funding in the final continuing resolution for administering CIAP, writing:

"I cannot emphasize how important the Coastal Impact Assistance Program is to Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.□ As the region struggles to recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2005, any delay in fully implementing this program stands as an obstacle to the assured safety of millions of Gulf Coast residents." □

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